

## **Food Poisoning**

Food poisoning is caused by eating food which is contaminated. Most contamination is caused by bacteria.

Sources of bacteria are people, air, raw foods, animals, insects, refuse, dust and dirt and water, which is not for drinking.

People carry bacteria in their hair, ears, nose, throat, intestines (guts) and on skin, particularly hands.

Raw foods likely to contain bacteria are meat, poultry, fruit and vegetables (especially soil vegetables) fish, and shellfish.

Work surfaces, knives, cloths and unwashed hands are vehicles for passing on bacteria to food.

Chemicals, including pesticides, bleach and other cleaning materials, can contaminate food if not used carefully, which can cause chemical poisoning.

Food poisoning bacteria can make us ill and last for days and in extreme circumstances can kill.

The following chart details the common food poisoning organisms.

<b>Type of food poisoning</b>	<b>Where the bacteria comes from</b>	<b>Onset time</b>	<b>Symptoms</b>
Salmonella	Raw meat, eggs, poultry, animals	6 – 72 hours (Usually 12- 24 hours)	Abdominal pains, diarrhoea, fever, vomiting, dehydration.
Clostridium perfringens	Raw meat, soil, excreta, insects	8 – 22 hours	Abdominal pain, diarrhoea
Staphylococcus aureus	Skin, nose, boils, cuts, raw milk	1 – 6 hours	Vomiting, abdominal pains, lower than normal temperature
Campylobacter	Meat, poultry, pets, unpasteurised milk	1 – 10 Days (Usually 2-5days)	Diarrhoea, stomach pain, high temperature, aching limbs.

Bacteria need warmth, food, moisture and time to multiply.

Food poisoning bacteria can only be detected in a laboratory; they do not usually affect the taste or smell of the food.

**VIRAL FOOD POISONING**

Viruses can also cause food poisoning symptoms. Those commonly associated with food poisoning are Small Round Structured Viruses and Norwalk-like viruses.

<b>Type</b>	<b>Where the virus comes from</b>	<b>Onset time</b>	<b>Symptoms</b>
Norwalk-like	<p><b>Food</b> – Shellfish, vegetables, faecal, oral.</p> <p><b>Aerosols</b> – vomit particles</p> <p><b>Surfaces</b> – door handles, toilets, washbasins.</p>	24-48 hours	Sudden vomiting, nausea, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, possible fever

**WHAT TO DO IF YOU RECEIVE AN ALLEGATION OF FOOD POISONING**

You will become involved in food poisoning investigations when:

- i) a food handler reports that he or she is suffering from diarrhoea and/or vomiting;
- ii) persons purchasing food from, or eating at, the premises, complain that they have subsequently been ill.

**If you are notified or a suspected case of food poisoning you must immediately contact the Food Safety Section.**

You must then make enquiries to find out:

- i) whether any staff have been ill
- ii) which food or meals were implicated and how they were handled or prepared; and
- iii) whether or not any person was affected.

If you become aware of an outbreak of food poisoning:

- i) stop serving any more food and stop any more food being eaten;
- ii) telephone a doctor or ambulance if necessary (if people are ill on the premises);
- iii) retain any remaining food, cans, cartons or other forms of food packaging, which may be needed to trace suspect foods;
- iv) inform the owners of the business
- v) prepare a relevant menu list and details of food preparation, storage temperatures, methods of cooking, cooling or reheating;
- vi) if possible, make a complete list of persons consuming the suspect meal, including their addresses;

## **GUIDANCE**

- vii) prepare a complete list of all food handlers and other staff, especially those involved with the suspect meal. Absent staff should be included, the reason for the absence should be given
- vii) make available your list of suppliers;
- viii) remain available on the premises to give the necessary information to the investigating officer
- iv) when the investigation has been completed, thoroughly clean and disinfect the premises.